The Commonweal

July 11, 1947

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Peacetime Conscription

Small Farmers' Plight

The French Record

After Taft-Hartley

VOLUME XLVI 15c NUMBER 13

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Out of some cold figures, came a story to warm America's heart

NOT LONG AGO, the Secretary of the United States Treasury studied a figure-covered sheet of paper.

The figures revealed a steady, powerful upswing in the sale of U. S. Savings Bonds, and an equally steady decrease in Bond Redemptions.

But to the Secretary, they revealed a good deal more than that, and Mr. Snyder spoke his mind:

"If you give them the facts," he said, "you can always depend on the common sense and long-range judgment of the American people.

"The last few months have given us heart-warming proof of that.

"After the Victory Loan, sales of U. S. Savings Bonds went down—redemptions went up. And that was only natural and human.

"It was natural and human—but it was also dangerous. For suppose this trend had continued. Suppose that, in this period of reconversion, some 80 million Americans had decided not only to stop saving, but to spend the $40 billion which they had *already* put aside in Series E, F & G Savings Bonds. The picture which *that* conjures up is not a pretty one!

"But the trend did NOT continue.

"Early last fall, the magazines of this country—nearly a thousand of them, acting together—started an advertising campaign on Bonds. This, added to the continuing support of other media and advertisers, gave the American people the facts . . . told them why it was important to buy and hold U. S. Savings Bonds.

"The figures on this sheet tell how the American people responded—and mighty good reading it makes.

"Once more, it has been clearly proved that when you give Americans the facts, you can then ask them for action—and *you'll get it!*"

What do the figures show?

On Mr. Snyder's sheet were some very interesting figures.

They showed that sales of Savings Bonds went from $494 million in last September to $519 million in October and kept climbing steadily until, in January of this year, they reached a new postwar high: **In January, 1947, Americans put nearly a billion dollars in Savings Bonds. And that trend is continuing.**

In the same way, redemptions have been going just as steadily downward. Here, too, the trend continues.

Moreover, there has been, since the first of the year, an increase not only in the volume of Bonds bought through Payroll Savings, but in the number of buyers.

How about YOU? The figures show that millions of Americans have realized this fact: there is no safer, surer way on earth to get the things you want than by buying U. S. Savings Bonds regularly.

They are the safest investment in the world. They pay you $4 for every $3 at the end of 10 years. And you can buy them automatically, almost painlessly today, through either of two plans:

If you are eligible for the Payroll Plan, for your own sake and your family's sake, get on it . . . and watch your savings mount up.

If you are not eligible for the Payroll Plan, but have a checking account, see your banker and get him to tell you about the new Bond-a-Month Plan.

Either of them will set you on the road to financial security, and the happiness that comes with it.

Save the easy, automatic way—with U. S. Savings Bonds

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The COMMONWEAL

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Bankers and the Bomb

WE HAVE READY for use, now, enough atom bombs to destroy every city in the world and somehow—it may be conscientiousness or something—that knowledge spoils this space this week. There was a story, there were three stories in the papers on two consecutive days, about the local provincial antics of bankers and stockbrokers in New York, and we had planned to lift the stories from the papers. There was the story about a great New York bank which had a customer who now is serving ten to twenty years for swindling, and when this bank found that its customer owed it $99,970 it kept very quiet about the matter and permitted the customer to deal with other banks, furnishing them, the D.A. charges, with false credit information about this troublesome client, so that he could make some other dirty deals and pay them back their ninety-nine thousand plus. That was the story with the moral about how the great banks do not always stick together; it was to have been a defense of capitalism—sort of—at least against the idea that banks are a cartel and do not enjoy free and disorderly enterprise.

There was another story about how stockbrokers have no snobbery in them at all. They will deal with absolutely anybody and be not only polite but extraordinarily helpful. They will provide a desk and a telephone so that you can buy and sell and sit there looking at the board while they chalk up the prices, and you can even become a sub-broker and receive your own clients. Even if you are an elevator man in uniform you can come to the brokers at lunch hour and they will gladly give you a desk, and you can stay there until you have to go back and ride the car up and down for the rest of the afternoon. That is what Sam Fusaro, elevator man in the Equitable Building, has been doing—long enough to lose $247,000 of his friends' money. It is all simple and friendly. Mr. Charles D. Halsey, managing partner of the brokerage concern, is quoted as saying: "He [Sam] is a heavy set fellow, standing all day, and I guess he wanted to sit down. We told him he could use this desk, the same as we do with other customers who like a desk of their own. . . . We had no knowledge, of course, that he was handling other people's money. The account was in his own name and that is all we knew about it."

The third story that we would have enjoyed telling is just a sad little human interest story intended to show that all these impressive figures in the cool quiet banking halls of the great cities, the treasurers, vice-presidents, assistant-secretaries, chairmen of the boards and so forth, are really just poor human beings whom their titles leave exposed to the same passions that swirl round barrooms and street corners. Forty-five executives of the great Chase National Bank went golfing in the country and then to dine at the Shenorock Shore Club in Rye, N. Y. At 10:30 PM, Mr. Fisher, bartender, testifies that he heard "ugly words, as if someone had a grouch." The rest is not worth telling; it is the accident which happens so often to the untitled poor; two vice-presidents of the Chase National Bank came to blows and now one of them, named Banker, is dead—of a cerebral hemorrhage caused by injuries, according to the County Medical Examiner, possibly received in the scuffle.

We had to drop these stories and perhaps it will not do any good to have dropped them because all we have to say about the atom bombs that we have piled up in this country, and about the atom bombs that soon will be piled up in other countries, is that the statesmen are making no progress toward preventing their being used. All we can say is that we cannot understand how it is possible that any statesmen anywhere can ever want to use them, and all we can say is that we know that if there is a war they will be used.

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All we can do is to whimper about it.

But at least it seems to us that this is almost a useful thing to do, and that it makes more sense than universal military training, arming Latin-America, accepting the idea of the inevitable war, preparing to fight the inevitable war, and refusing to call—plaintively or not—but day after day, upon all the peoples of the world to force their representatives to make the peace without which they will die.

Two Neighbors

IN THE EFFORTS of the United States to bolster Western Europe our relations with nations nearer at hand get scant attention. Yet it is in this hemisphere closer at hand that decisions made in Washington have the greatest impact on a foreign community's daily life . Two of our closest neighbors figured in the newspapers in a minor fashion during the week.

Cuba, the largest island of the West Indies, lies but ninety miles off Key West. It is populated by 5,000,000 souls. Since 1934 the United States has forsworn the right to intervene in the island's political affairs, but Cuba's dominantly sugar economy is almost completely dependent upon the aggregate of individual and industrial consumers in the United States. That tobacco and its products is the second largest Cuban commodity only emphasizes the island's colonial status in the economic sense of the term. National poverty is inevitable.

At the end of last month the Confederation of Cuban Workers and the National Federation of Sugar Workers sank some money in newspapers in the States to argue for a quota which would allot to Cuba one-half the sugar consumption of the United States; the industry which employs 60 percent of the workers on the island has a bumper crop. This request, which cites all the United States goods Cubans will continue to buy if the full quota is assigned, comes at the very moment our Department of Agriculture is increasing the ration for this nation's industrial users of sugar to 85 percent of their 1941 consumption. There is still a scarcity of sugar in this country. However, American jobbers and domestic sugar producers (including our notorious western beet-sugar interests) are fearful that succeeding crops will also be plentiful. They are exerting pressure against the Cuban workers. Accession to the request of the sugar-workers' union is called for now. But over the years the United States must take the initiative in establishing other industries (Cuba has at last reached the point where she is exporting cattle) to enable this neighboring people to work its way out of its present state of peonage.

With Mexico our ties are not so close either politically or economically, despite the veto we are said to hold over the Mexican presidency and her fiscal dependence on our annual purchases of silver. There the principal industry is mining, but a large proportion of that republic's twenty-five millions subsist on what they can grow. The big obstacle up here to Mexican development is our niggardliness about water rights. Big interests in several far western states have too often succeeded in witholding or diverting, for their own use, life-giving irrigation.

The current visit of the Mexican Corn Commission under the guidance of the Rockefeller Foundation indicates certain highly useful collaboration on our part. Mexico intends to increase her irrigated cultivated areas six-fold within the next six years and by means of hybrid seeds to increase acreage yields by thirty percent. If we can assist Mexico in agricultural mechanization without saddling her with factories in the fields like ours we shall indeed, among other things, be building up markets for our own goods. Especially if at the same time we also extend our know-how to the Mexican authorities who are working out a decentralization of industry both organizational and geographical, stressing anti-monopoly and the establishment of modern new industrial centers near sources of raw materials.

A Necessary Stop-Gap

JUNE 30 marked the end both of government operation of the nation's coal mines and of the enforceability of the federal mine safety code. The return from public to private ownership was marked by considerable confusion, for many of the miners were out in protest over the Taft-Hartley Act or "on vacation." Hardly any notice marked the miners' return to dependence for safe working conditions on the uncertainties of state inspections. The American public already seems to have forgotten the Centralia disaster of three months ago, where the assignment of state mine inspectors to political tasks led to the loss of 111 lives. Unhappily, regulations and seriousness of enforcement do vary widely state by state; and federal mine inspectors can now only notify and recommend. Papers such as the Kansas City *Times* and the St. Louis *Star-Times* have called for appropriate action in Washington. Secretary Krug and Senator Butler of Nebraska have proposed a one-year extension of the expired federal mine code, which empowers inspectors to shut down dangerous mines, while Senator Kilgore of West Virginia would extend it indefinitely. Anything to afford protection while permanent regulations are drawn up!

The Hopeless Route

ABOUT TWENTY years ago, the question of universal military training in the USA was a great seasonal favorite with the college debating societies. It was a fine subject to wrangle about;

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every bit as good, in fact, as that other old college favorite—nationalization of the railroads, and the debaters could give it everything they had without coming anywhere near the relevant world. At least, that's the way it looked at the time; nobody ever expected to run into the problem on the outside. But they have. The question of universal military training is back again, only this time it looks every bit as grim and battered as do the former young men who used to argue about it. To the alumni, the 1947 version of the military training argument must look very much like this year's example of college football: the rudiments are about what they used to be, but otherwise the game is considerably more slick and humorless. It just is not fun anymore.

There is one thing about the universal military training question in its current professional form, however, which is an improvement over the days when it was an entirely amateur problem. Twenty years ago (and even much more recently than that) the people who lined up for the evening's debate on the side of universal military training always claimed to believe that it would do great things for everybody's character and muscle. This time, fortunately, that passage in the argument has been carefully snipped out, and even such boosters of peace through military training as President Truman have refused to discuss the matter on the YMCA level.

Recently, when the President appointed a citizens committee to look into the advantages and disadvantages of military training for this country, he advised the members to forget about the all-day hikes, the tent-pitching, and the disciplinary benefits. The President's admonition deprives the military training notion of many of its traditional banners, but it proves, at least, that even as far as the people who favor it are concerned, the plan for universal military training in the USA will be compelled to win or lose on its own, no character and fresh-air holds allowed. Mr. Truman asked his committee, quite simply, to give him an answer to the one question about universal military training that everyone else wants to know, too: Will it make war less likely?

The President's committee told him that it would, and during the month or so which has gone by since they turned in their conclusions a number of other people have backed them up, in statements to Congressional committees, or by means of free-lance statements to the public.

The case in favor of universal military training looks awfully good. We are dealing with folk who claim to believe in peace but who also quite obviously incline toward big armies. Until they correct the slight contradiction between what they say they believe and what they appear to be doing, there seems, so the argument runs, to be only one thing to do: keep up with them.

Well, it is certainly true that until members of the other half of the late one world begin to act the way they say they feel, it would be rather pointless for the United States to trim our armed forces down to a Great Lakes fleet and a platoon of West Point cadets. But as it happens, we are already in the lead. We possess the unmentionable instrument. We would like to get out of that race, too, but we are not able to at the moment, and since we cannot, it seems useless to step up the temperature of a dilemma that is already burning in our hands by building up an enormous potential army. For, if the atomic scientists have any worthwhile bit of advice to pass on to us at all, it is this: that if there is another war (a) We are all done for; and (b) Having a large army at hand will not even serve to prolong the agony.

If the scientists have the right information—and, with the exception of some depressing minor quibbling about the precise amount of time that will be required to run off an atomic war, nobody seems to have contradicted them with any conviction—then universal military training will not be the answer to anything, and will merely embitter the final years on earth of those who are compelled to endure it.

There is one more compelling argument against universal military training. The United States, as a world power, has entered on an era of extreme delicacy. In regard to the Soviet Union, we are committed to a policy of genial but attentive restraint. We have acknowledged, with regret, the necessity for implied force and pressure. At the same time, we have passed, with unfair rapidity, from racy youth to a beset middle age, and there is a great temptation to give in to our impatience, to resolve, or to attempt a resolution of our difficulties by means of the force and pressure whose existence we only lately came to admit. In our new circumstances we are likely, at any moment, to send out a call to the police and the military to come in and solve our social and international problems. Universal military training would increase that temptation and would, by inference, strengthen popular faith in the ultimate use of force as a solution. Only by the greatest care will we prevent the moment of extreme delicacy from slipping over into a moment of extreme hysteria.

If a sizable Army and Navy is needed to cast an occasional cooling shadow over incidents which could develop into the final war—and there is every reason to believe that, at this moment in world hypertension, the argument is a good one—then it is the job of our military organizations to meet their part of that problem and to build the kind of professional Army and Navy which will be useful on such an occasion. Universal military training will not supply the kind of Army and Navy we need now and, more unfortunately, it is a hopeless route to extended peace.

JOHN BRODERICK.

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Four Million Families

The threat to America's small farmers and its national implications

Edward Skillin, Jr.

UNHAPPILY, I find that the people who say things and the way in which they say them have undue influence on my reactions to a point at issue. All through the war and its tragic aftermath I have been repelled by the query: "Why should we send so much aid abroad when there are so many of our own people right in this country poorly off?" The reiteration of this question has diverted my attention from the appalling poverty which still exists in our land of plenty; my diffidence in the matter was reinforced by the state of over-employment which obtained here during the war.

Recently national emphasis on the Marshall program for European rehabilitation has been the sort of thing to absorb all editorial energies. Even today it is not an easy idea to put across. And with UNRRA funds for Europe's displaced persons running out on June 30 there is also the desperate plight of the DP's. More specifically, the Stratton Bill which so far has been obstructed by American lethargy and self-interest or the kind of exaggerated self-concern exhibited at first at the meeting of the nation's women's clubs.

To have focused attention on critical situations such as these has not been a misdirection of emphasis—especially when coupled with unwavering opposition to the Taft-Hartley Bill and occasional reminders of such long-range objectives as river valley development, resource conservation and support of the idea of the American family-type farm. However, the publication this week of a volume of less than two hundred pages* has set me scurrying through all the material at hand on the current American farm situation. And somehow, in presenting all this from a desk on Fourth Avenue, a narrow chasm away from the megapolitan headquarters of the New York Life Insurance Company, I do not consider myself in the same category with those enterprising young men who once built up a successful farm paper by editorializing in a provocative manner on the hardships of city life. I do not expect that this article will produce many protesting letters from American farmers.

One reason is that the wall handwriting is in such large "caps." What is happening to American agriculture is so obvious. After the first European war less than one-quarter of our American farms were 1,000 acres and more in area; the proportion today is over 40 percent and it is constantly increasing. These are Washington figures. They point to more and more exploitation of the soil by agricultural corporations or factories in the fields. They embody a point of view on agriculture enunciated by the United States Chamber of Commerce in March 1945 to the effect that regardless of human and other factors we should "encourage the production of food and raw materials on those farms which are capable of providing the largest average returns per unit of labor and capital expended."

Of course this shift to larger acreages reflects the tremendous technical advances achieved during the past decade, especially during the war. I refer not only to the celebrated cotton picker, the corn picker, the use of rubber-tired farm implements and hybrid seeds, the pick-up haybaler, DDT and other new insecticides, and many other new production and protection techniques, but also to improvement of existing tools and machines. Today's tractor, for instance, can plunge ahead at six miles per hour — or double the speed of the farm tractor of the middle nineteen-thirties. Cultivators can handle as much as 24 feet at a time, or half again as much as ten years ago. The one-way disc plow for wheatfields can cut a swath about twice as wide as previously. The *Iowa Farm Register* of Des Moines shows a picture of a four-row tractor-drawn planter which planted 80 acres of corn in a day (from 6 A.M. to 9:30 P. M.). The examples could be multiplied; and it is not surprising that larger farms in the United States registered a 40 percent increase in production efficiency during the war.

These changes also mean a number of other things. Technological unemployment is one of the first on the list. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* survey expatiating on the theme that farm workers had received a bigger wartime and post-war wage boost than American industrial workers it was disclosed that except in certain sections of the Southeast where there is some demand at the moment for cotton harvesters, there are not nearly enough farm jobs to go round. This despite

*The American Farmer. Lee Fryer. Harper. $3.00.

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record commodity prices, large crops and extraordinary foreign demand. In California, where tracts and agricultural corporations do run to size, the fruit growers have been most vehement in their requests that state authorities ward off any further job applicants. They happen to have a lot of frozen fruit still to be disposed of, too.

Another result of mechanical efficiency is competitive pressure against the smaller farm. Some of this is current even with present prices, but where will the small farmer be when commodities reach a more normal level? It is significant that the trend from ownership to tenancy on the part of the American farm family as a result of this pressure is so marked that even in prosperous Iowa the trend from tenancy to ownership has been reversed for the first time in ten years.

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But I think that is enough about the well-oiled dragon and his part in swelling the ranks of Arkies and Okies and other rural proletarians. The present state and immediate prospects of the small farm operator are my chief concern here. I share the previously cited Mr. Fryer's conviction that the family-type farm should be the backbone of American agriculture, as well as the concern he expresses so eloquently in his extraordinarily factual little book.

Mechanization is as good a springboard as any. Mr. Fryer estimates that on the American small farm one man hour of labor produces on the average $1.00's worth of goods, whereas an industrial worker in the same time will produce four or five times as much. That is why it is so difficult even at present commodity prices for the small operator to earn the $1,400 net cash income which is the estimated minimum for decent family life. To make things worse, because they act in isolation many farmers can be said to sell at wholesale and buy at retail—an obviously losing game. Current surveys also show that many of these families try to get along on insufficient land as well as outmoded equipment. And, because their margin of existence is so tenuous at best, any major illness in the family, bad crop year, accidents, animal diseases or other unforeseen misfortunes are devastating in their effects. At the same time farm mortgages are of the most disadvantageous type —they are short term, requiring speedy liquidation, and the interest rates of from 6 to 8 percent are several times the going rate for commercial loans in the city. A city man may lose his business but a farmer who succumbs to the mortgage on his property loses his home. The influences dislodging the small operator from his farm are manifold. Paramount is underemployment on too small acreages, the case with two million of our farms in 1942.

Insecurity is only one of the results of this hand to mouth existence which is the lot—in varying degrees—of some four million American farm families. Poverty is manifest in numerous ways. I cite poor health and lack of medical care, higher infant and maternal mortality, lack of sanitary facilities and housing conditions that are beyond belief. The rejection rate for rural selectees was double that of their city compatriots. Over one-third of our farm homes are so rotted and dilapidated as to be beyond repair, nine out of ten are without bathrooms or toilets and nearly as many without running water.

There is not much point in dragging out this catalogue of miseries. A few weeks ago *Life* magazine frankly said that there were two million too many farmers on the land and that they should be withdrawn as speedily as possible. That tallies with the sentiments of the Chamber of Commerce. Five years hence another million or two of excessive farm workers can be expected under the present system, or lack of system. This is no longer a question as to the environment best fitted for the development of the family. It is an urgent practical problem. What will happen to our millions of the displaced? To say that they should be transported to the cities is no solution whatever. Within the next two or three years the American city will be pressed from all sides by its own unemployed. There is only one feasible solution: to keep them in the country.

And here again Mr. Fryer's book is remarkably illuminating. He has drawn up a comprehensive program of agricultural reform aimed at preserving the economically-excess rural American in a secure place on the land. In order that farmsteads be economically large enough, he proposes a considerable shifting about, with older farmers retiring to a well-earned semi-rest. He urges efficient land-planning and distribution at the local level. A second major plank is the establishment of local industries of the manufacturing and service types to absorb a number of the able-bodied who cannot be profitably employed on the land itself. Others would find work in extensive soil conservation and forestry services which would benefit the whole community. But one of the largest means of providing useful employment in the country would be the construction of badly needed private homes, schools and hospitals.

A strictly domestic program of this scope may seem a far cry from General Marshall, but there is a connection which I detect in Mr. Fryer's next proposal. Congress should pass a "Rural Reconstruction and Full Employment Act" whereby any community which presented a well-conceived plan for revised utilization of its own farm lands, the setting up of local conservation services and the establishment of feasible local industries would qualify for certain government funds. Although no coordinated presentation is contemplated at the outset, regional planning would constitute the next step. Yet as his proposal stands, Mr. Fryer seems to be advocating what might be

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called a "little Marshall plan" for our own fellow-countrymen.

Except for the all-important enabling act of Congress the initiative will have to come from the farmers of the local community, who will also have full charge of administering the modest appropriated funds. Local initiative has also to be the basis for starting credit unions and cooperatives which will make possible access to many goods and services which the individual farmer and rural employee would be unable to obtain without the collaboration of his neighbors: insurance of all sorts, hospitals, electricity, medical care, adequate food and feed and farm machinery (which latter can be individually or jointly owned). If at the same time the present Congress will have passed the widely supported National Soil Fertility Act, the establishment of factories equal to the production of good phosphates and other urgently needed fertilizers coupled with an extensive enough demonstration program in every sector of the country, will make a prosperous countryside that much more possible. For only about one-eighth of the nation's arable land is safe from the erosion of its topsoil today, according to the most competent experts.

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It may seem tiresome to repeat that the economic fate of four million American rural families is of paramount importance to the nation's industrial workers. Long before the question arises of competing for the same scarce jobs, there is the matter of sustained purchasing power. A lot of family farmers in the middle brackets are now managing to get along somehow in the face of big business competition and they will continue to do so during this boom-price period. It is while they are still self-sustaining that we have a real chance to see that they are on their feet. Once they have exhausted their meager savings, lost their land to the mortgage company or otherwise gone under economically, it will be much more costly to rehabilitate them, and by then our own resources will be shrinking. This is the big opportunity, our big chance to fend off now the worst effects of a depression that is otherwise inevitable. How many of our farm leaders and our political leaders have the vision to appreciate this fact? Jewish, Protestant and Catholic rural life are alive to the strategic importance of the well-being of the American family farmer but of the national farm organizations themselves only the Farmers Union, with headquarters at Denver, Colorado, seems vitally concerned about the present dangers.

In calling for a "little Marshall plan" here at home and in pointing to the plight of our own rural displaced persons I am not doing so as an alternative to the international policies we have been consistently advocating. The two should be simultaneous. And of the two the domestic rehabilitation program would be far less costly. It is interesting to note that the Twentieth Century Fund's mammoth new volume on "America's Needs and Resources" estimates that the right long-range development and rehabilitation program of the nation's agricultural land could be accomplished for half a billion a year. The TVA area provides irrefutable proof that government funds invested in this general fashion bring manifold returns. A "little Marshall plan" of the Fryer type is called for both by the exigencies of the present rural situation and the national economic prospect of the next five years. On something of this sort are dependent several million American families, and ultimately the whole national well-being.

Isis Wanderer

This too is an experience of the soul,
The dismembered world that once was the whole god
Whose broken fragments now lie dead.
This passing of reality itself is real.

Gathering under my black cloak the remnants of life
That lie dishonored among people and places
I search the twofold desert of my solitude,
The outward perished world, and the barren mind.

Once he was present, numinous, in the house of the world,
Wearing the earth like a garment, his beauty manifest
In corn and man as he journeyed in his boat down the fertile river.
Majestic he entered the canopy of my night.

I trace the contour of his hand facing upon a cloud,
And this his blood flows from a dying soldier's wound,
In broken fields his body is scattered and his limbs lie
Spreadeagled like wrecked fuselage in the sand.

His skull is a dead cathedral, and his crown's rays
Glitter from worthless tins and broken glass.
His blues eyes are reflected from pools in the gutter,
And his strength is the desolate stone of fallen cities.

Oh in the kitchen-midden of my dreams,
Turning over the potsherds of past days
Shall I uncover his loved desecrated face?
Are the unfathomed depths of sleep his grave?

Beyond the looming dangerous end of night
Beneath the vaults of fear do his bones lie,
And does the maze of nightmare lead to the power within?
Do menacing nether-waters cover the fish-king?

I gather the divine fragments into the mandala
Whose center is the lost creative power,
The sun, the heart of god, the rose, the electron
That pulses world upon world, ray upon ray
That he who lived on the first may rise on the last day.

KATHLEEN RAINE.

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The French Record

A note on the accomplishments of empire

C. H. Brenier

IT seems a long time ago—it was in our issue of January 31—that we published an article by Mr. George F. Sheldon entitled "The Case for Viet Nam." *Mr. Sheldon was extremely indignant about what he considered to be a long list of enormous abuses committed by the French colonial administration. He presented the Viet Nam Republic as an intelligent, patriotic effort made by the Indo-Chinese to secure their rightful independence. He suggested that the French had never earned any right to govern in Indo-China and that in these modern and illuminated times their duty was to get out of Indo-China and go back to France.*

At the time, editorially, we expressed considerable doubt as to the validity of Mr. Sheldon's thesis. We felt that if there were a revolutionary case to be made for the Vietnamese, there must certainly be a case that could be made for the French. We did not like the idea of liberating a country which could not defend itself and which, it seemed to us, must fall fatally under the influence of some stronger power—which, in superseding the French authority, need not necessarily bring greater happiness to the people of Indo-China. We said that it seemed very exaggerated to deny all the civilizing influences brought by the presence of France in Indo-China and, in general, of Europe in the Far East.

This controversy took place months ago, but unfortunately an unstable and chaotic situation still persists in Indo-China. We now receive the article which follows this note and which comes to us from a Frenchman whose experience qualifies him to present the case for France. In his letter accompanying the article Professor Brenier appeals to America's sense of fair play; he compares France's record in Indo-China with our record in the Philippines; he questions the good faith of the Vietnamese: "The very next day [after having stated that they hoped to reach friendly and frank relations with the French] the Vietnamese Central Committee sent out a secret communiqué to all its local political authorities instructing them that 'our conduct must be regulated in such a way that within two years at the most all Frenchmen must have left, voluntarily or involuntarily, Viet Nam.'"—THE EDITORS.

IT IS, of course, quite impossible in the space of a short article to give an adequate idea of what France has done in Indo-China, where she has been present for the last eighty-seven years in Cochin-China and for more than sixty years in Tonkin and Annam; not to mention Cambodia or Laos. A whole book would be necessary. In this instance, I intend simply to present a few essential facts and figures concerning our record on four fundamental aspects of the colony's life: economic, cultural, social and political. And in conclusion, I shall compare our record in Indo-China with the obligations of the trusteeships instituted by the United Nations Charter of San Francisco.

The rice problem was the first thing we had to tackle, since it is the vital one for a country having, on its 287,900 square miles (Great Britain with North Ireland: 93,900 square miles), a population of 25 millions (according to the latest estimate, 1942) with a probable natural yearly increase of 1.34 percent accumulated in the Deltas where rice is the most appropriate and, indeed, unavoidable crop. Those Deltas represent about 10 percent only of the total surface, but contain 70 percent of the population.

In the Mekong delta the surface of the rice fields passed from 820,000 acres in 1880 (first year of sufficiently reliable statistics) to 5,750,000 acres on the eve of the second World War, leaving a large surplus for exports which grew from 287,000 metric tons in 1880 to a maximum of 1,797,000 tons and an average of 1,500,000 tons for the last ten years, giving Cochin-China the second place as world rice-exporter and the first as Europe's purveyor. This progress was made possible by the excavation of 1,300 kilometers (807 miles; nearly twice the distance between London and Edinburgh) of "main" canals. The dredging for those works and their maintenance necessitated, to take the sole instance of the 1913-1930 period, the digging of from 6 to 10 million cubic meters of silt per annum.

In the Red River delta in Tonkin we have been, since our arrival in Indo-China, confronted by a most formidable problem. The river has tremendous floods; that of 1913, for example, which lasted for 21 days, discharged 33 *billion cubic meters of water,* and the inundation compelled us to re-

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pair, strengthen, or raise the major part of the 1,500 milometers of dykes (main and subsidiary) running over the delta 930 miles (about one-third more than the direct distance, by land, between Land's End and John O'Groats; or equal to that between Philadelphia and St. Louis, calculated on the map). Irrigation works have secured the rice crop or rendered it more profitable over 650,000 acres, and plans have been drawn up and actual construction begun for 1,215,000 acres more. If the works finished or started in Annam and Cambodia are added to those of Cochin-China and Tonkin, we can present a total of 4 million and one-third acres of new rice land put at the disposal of the natives. Of course, this achievement cannot be compared with what has been done in British India, but it must be remembered that the whole Indo-China Deltas (Mekong, Red River and small deltas along the Annamite coast) do not cover more than about 24,400 square miles, whereas, in India, the sole delta of the Ganges represents over 50,000 square miles.

*

The French government did not stop at this. Concurrently, steps were taken to improve the quality of the rice. The "Indo-Chinese Rice Office" has been pursuing, for years, the amelioration of the innumerable "races" of native and foreign *paddies*. More than one thousand strains have been examined in the laboratories and tried in experimental farms or plots prior to their distribution to the native cultivators; about one-third having been found useful according to their cultural, industrial or commercial advantages.

In addition to its concern for the rice crop, the French government can point with genuine pride to the improvement brought about, through French efforts, in other crops. It should also be noted that, as in the case of rice, the vast majority of the crops improved are of greatest interest (from the profit point-of-view) to the natives. and *not to our planters,* who only cultivate a few of them (coffee, tea, tobacco), and have turned almost exclusively to rubber planting.

Agricultural credit societies, lending at from 6 to 12 percent interest, were launched in Cochin-China many years ago, with the help of the public exchequer and the official *Banque de l'Indochine*, as a remedy against the abuses of the money-lender, both native (big proprietors), Indian (*Chetties*) and Chinese, who were in the habit of exacting from 30 to 40 percent interest for their loans. This practice constituted an obvious social plague through the whole Far East, with its immensely predominating agricultural population—probably over 90 percent The credit societies have had to fight against immemorial custom, enormous vested interests, inexperienced administrators and untrained Secretaries, and, one must add, against frequent bad faith of the borrowers themselves. A further hindrance to the work of the societies was the economic crisis which set in after 1929, especially on agriculture produce.

Nevertheless, the credit societies represented a new start in Indo-China. In some parts of Indo-China, the capital lent, with the help of the budget and of provincial banks, reached 134 million francs in 1938. Eighteen rural cooperative societies for the production of different goods, both agricultural and industrial, were functioning at the same date.

Just before the 1939 war, the then Governor General, M. Brevie, courageously tackled, along new lines, a gigantic problem which had already been approached for some years and had ended in the failure of some of the attempted remedies tried. The problem was the transfer of part of the population of 8 or 9 million accumulated in the Tonkinese Delta at a mean density of 1290 to the square mile (and almost double at certain spots; to my knowledge the heaviest rural density in the world). M. Brevie's plan was inspired by the Dutch solution of the same difficulty in Java, where whole families had been transferred with success to Sumatra, after careful preparation. There is reason to hope that, given the opportunity, the same thing may be successfully accomplished in Indo-China, if the same preliminary measures are taken.

If the plan is permitted to move ahead, new cultivations—differing from that of deltaic rice—will have to be tried on experimental farms in the prospective settlements so as to make sure of the quality of the soil and of their success and so as to be able to distribute the seeds to the new settlers and to guide them. The settler families will have to be carefully selected. The help of the Indo-China Pasteur Institutes will be required for preventive measures against the malarial fever which is often prevalent on new ground. This is particularly true if forests have first to be cleared. There is also the fundamental difficulty owing to the Annamite peasants' reluctance to leave their ancestral villages where they render religious honors to their dead.

In this brief review of the French record in the Far East the economic record of our planters cannot be forgotten, but we can only mention their contribution to a better cultivation of the fundamental crop of the country as proprietors of rice fields in the west of Cochin-China. Let it first of all be said—in contradiction to one of the innumerable calumnies heaped up against us by Ho Chi Minh in the Declaration of Independence of 2nd September, 1945—that, far from "robbing" the Annamites of their rice-fields, the fact is those in European hands did not exceed 8 percent of the total surface devoted to rice.

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This percentage can be compared, to our advantage, with the surface taken from the Puerto Rico peasants by the big American sugar companies before its recent buying up and redistribution by the State. And we can mention the development they have given, as already mentioned, to coffee, tea, and tobacco plantations. But their principal success has been, as it has been said, hevea culture, which is almost exclusively in their hands. Rubber now covers 325,000 acres, especially in the east of Cochin-China and a part of Cambodia. Many of the trees are grown from the best "clones" according to the latest scientific methods first started by the Dutch in the Netherland Indies; and the export of rubber exceeded 60,000 metric tons in 1938, a quantity almost equal to the needs of the metropolis. Though this result was not envisaged (the emigration from the congested Red River and other Deltas was inspired only by the rubber and other planters' need of an abundant labor force), the fact remains that the transplantation of probably over 20,000 hands has contributed to the easing of the congestion, as have new and beneficent outlets for surplus products through industry, foreign commerce and growing transport facilities.

Along this same line, it may be added that from 1929 to 1938 over 3 billion francs were spent on public works. If the sums spent since Governor General Doumer started the great plan of public works in 1896 were added, the total would certainly reach from 8 to 10 billion francs at least.

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Such is a succinct picture of France's economic activity and its results at the eve of the war; for her benefit, for the benefit of her colonies, but also —and far more—for the benefit of the natives. A brief survey of the French cultural accomplishments in Indo-China should serve to strengthen this impression.

In this domain also only a very short sketch can be given. The budgets, general and local, for education totaled 239 million francs in 1944. More than eight-hundred and fifty thousand native children were given, in public and priate (Catholic, lay and Chinese) schools, a primary education; more than ten thousand, a secondary one. Natives in the French lycées represented a quota of from 15 to 32 percent of the school population. There were 32 art colleges. Higher education included, the school population represented, the war notwithstanding, close upon nine-hundred thousand units (897,000). In primary education alone, the quota of girls had passed from forty thousand in 1939 to one hundred thousand in 1944.

So much for the "illiteracy" we have been reproached with fostering—*quoc ngu* having been spread by us, to speak only of Cochin-China, since 1862, that is to say for *85 years*. It would really poorly redound to the Annamites' zeal for knowledge if illiteracy had really existed for 80 percent of the population as our Vietnamese accusers pretend—to the detriment of their own fellow countrymen.

Besides the facilities given to native students (almost exclusively Annamites, but also a few Cambodians and Laotians), coming from our "lycées," who desire to finish their instruction in France, a University was founded in Hanoi twenty-six years ago (1920) on special lines, according to a plan obtaining elsewhere in the Far East. It consists of five "colleges": (1) Medicine and pharmacy; (2) Law; (3) Fine Arts; (4) Agriculture; (5) Public Works, the law college having by far the largest quota of the 1529 students inscribed. More physicians and surgeons would be far more useful and so would more native engineers, but account must be taken of a persistent prejudice among the people in favor of native medicine and remedies (some of which are quite good), on the one hand; and on the other hand, of the repugnance, among the Annamite intelligentsia, who have been brought up, for centuries, in a fervent admiration of the Chinese Classics, for anything savoring of practical usefulness, especially if related to handwork.

One of the cultural achievements we can best be proud of is out *Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient,* one of Mr. Doumer's foundations in 1901, with the cooperation of the *Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* of the Institute of France. It is not a "school" with pupils, but somewhat on the lines of the French or British School of Athens and Rome, a centre of studies to which "specialists" are appointed by the above Academy with the approval of the Governor General.

Along this same line, I can personally testify to the sincere admiration expressed to me by great Anglo-Indian Servants I had the honor of meeting at Calcutta in 1910, when the Ecole Française had only been functioning for ten years. Its record has flourished since. Suffice it to recall, besides the linguistic and paleographic studies, the resuscitation of a forgotten history and civilization, that of the Chams (pronounced Tiames) in Central and South Annam. Also the discovery of the authentic Le dynasty Code which had been lost sight of by the Annamites themselves since Gia Long, due to their exaggerated admiration of the Tsings. And, finally the reclaiming from the forest and brushwood overgrowth, and study, of close upon one thousand Cambodian temples, and especially, the magnificent restitution and detailed examination of the Great Angkor Monument, the *chef-d'oeuvre* of Indian Art, rediscovered by the French traveler, Henri Nouhet, in 1859 and already studied in 1865 and the following years by Doudart de Legree and Delaporte. No other colonial country can boast, I think, of a service ren-

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dered with the same completeness to Asiatic human endeavor in all its intellectual forms. The *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise de Extreme-Orient,* in its thirty-ninth year of publication at the beginning of the war, though far from being sufficiently known in France itself, has a world-wide reputation among specialists in the field.

On the medical side, it should be pointed out that French Indo-China has 909 sanitary institutions (hospitals, medical centres, infirmaries, dispensaries, maternity centres, etc) frequented in 1942 by 348,000 in and some 5,230,000 out patients, representing some thirteen million consultations. The more than eight thousand lepers are cared for in special asylums (generally restricted to our Missionary Sisters) and segregation villages. Native doctors, though still present in far too inadequate numbers, as well as hospital attendants, nurses, and social assistants are gradually increasing.

Our four Pasteur Institutes have done some splendid work, in addition to Yersin's discovery of the origin of pneumonic plague and its remedy. Vaccination against small-pox, cholera, pneumonic plague, typhoid fever and tuberculosis reached a maximum of 13,900,000 in 1938. The French medical services fight constantly against malaria, dysentery, venereal diseases and rabies. School and town hygiene, including the inspection of water works and water distribution receive due attention. In Laos and Annam, ambulatory health inspections are carried out amid serious difficulties but with success. There exists also a maritime sanitary police to guard against epidemics from the outside.

Among the French social and political improvements is a regulation forbidding night work for women and child labor. A holiday must be allowed to all workers at least once a week, as well as paid holidays. Security benefits are provided for and minimum wage commissions have been created. A special control legislation has been drawn up for the hands employed on the plantations. Furthermore, just prior to the war, a whole series of legal acts had been prepared relating to accidents, to trade disputes, to trade unions and were awaiting the approval of the metropolis.

It will probably interest those unfamiliar with the French political record in Indo-China to know that ever since its creation, fifty years ago, natives have been admitted as members of the Grand Council of the Colony under its different historical forms and that they have now at their disposal 30 seats as against 23 for the French officials or colonists. The Colonial Council of Cochin-China, founded in 1880, has frequently elected an Annamite as its president. We have created a Chamber of Representatives of the People in Tonkin and Annam, and a Consultative Assembly in Cambodia and Laos. There are also provincial assemblies in the five political divisions of the Colony: Cochin-China, Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos. And there are municipalities in the five big towns of Saigon, Cholon, Pnon-Penh, Haiphong and Hanoi, as well as in a certain number of smaller centers.

Since 1928, natives have been entitled to the same posts and salaries as French officials in all the local services, provided they can produce the same university diplomas. One might point out here that if Frenchmen enjoy a "colonial allowance" and a special indemnity for the cost of living, they are justified by the difference between the requirements of their social and material conditions and those of the natives. Informed Frenchmen will readily admit, however, that there were certain abuses in the excess of certain indemnities, and that the higher native officials were insufficiently paid.

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If the different sections of the present article are recapitulated and compared with the stipulations as to *Trusteeships* formulated in the United Nations San Francisco charter concerning the political, economic, social and pedagogical (we prefer the word "cultural") progress of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories and their progressive development towards free government "and independence", we sincerely believe it will be recognized that the French have already treated Indo-China as a trusteeship.

Communications

FOOD PARCELS

Altenberg, Bez. Koln.

TO the Editors: We have got a CARE package dated 7/29, '46, the receipt of which bears your name. I should like to express *our heartiest gratitude* for it. You cannot imagine how much we enjoy such a package and how great a help it is. Now I can distribute the gifts from America among them. In the monotony of our daily rations *one* package means already a great value to us.

Besides, we take those packages as a sign of peace, as a dove of peace from Noah's Ark. It was a great trouble to us to experience anew during the two last months that the world cannot find peace and that good will is destroyed by ever new claims for power. But we still have much confidence in the energy of the American Government and in the understanding of the American people.

Yesterday, the first pilgrimage of the month of May to Our Lady of Altenberg took place, made by the male youth of the diocese of Cologne. The Cardinal of Cologne was present and addressed a sermon to them. We had expected some 5,000 boys to come but no less than 14,000 arrived.

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The cathedral, of course, was too small to receive them all. Therefore another service had to be held in the open air. I had to preach at a second meeting in a forest meadow. The boys had come from far off and by very different ways. But they did not fear the long journey nor did they fear hunger and thirst. Their mothers could give them but very little bread, and we at the youth center here could not supply them with the slightest nourishment, save that 500 cups of thin ersatz coffee were distributed.

Then a car came along containing an official of the consulate of one of the allied forces. He asked the policeman in charge: "What is that? Hitlerjugend?" "No," the policeman replied, "that is Catholic youth making a pilgrimage." The official: "That is the same. Yesterday they were following Hitler flags and today they are gathering under Catholic flags." And he drove off.

How can peace be restored in the world if there is such a measure of misunderstanding and ill-will, if not hatred? Therefore we beg you over there to do all in your power, personally and publicly, to increase understanding of Germany. Our people is far from being entirely poisoned. There is a young generation which did not participate in the crimes of the past, a generation of young Catholics who courageously offered resistance to Hitler's despotism to the end. But this youth needs confidence and help. The danger that a new "ism" may come over our people is very great in view of the present misery and propaganda. Youth, especially that of the eastern zone, is under the influence of thousands of functionaries, who are working to spread eastern politics and who are outfitted with large subsidies.

There is only one way to avoid youth's falling back into radicalism and to provide a free development for Western culture: it is the furtherance of Christianity within the German people and within German youth.

Msgr. LUDWIG WOLKER.

SANCTIONS AGAINST FRANCO

Carlton, Oregon

TO the Editors: Since my knowledge of Spain is much more limited than that of Mr. Hughes, as I spent only six weeks there last year, it may be presumptuous for me to caution against his proposal of forcing Franco out by the application of sanctions. Furthermore, I partially agree with Mr. Hughes when he says the Franco régime is likely to bring about communism, and completely agree with his belief that the Russian anti-Franco agitation is just a sham.

I see three dangers in Mr. Hughes's proposal: it entails an unnecessary risk; it is liable to strengthen Franco rather than weaken him; it would impose more hardships on a population which already suffers too much.

Permit me to elaborate on these points. (1) The abdication of a dictator always creates an upheaval, particularly when it has been forced by outside pressure. At a time when the West and the East are engaged in a struggle for Europe, it is hardly advisable to risk giving the communists an opening in Spain. Against this opinion the objection may be raised that if a continuation of the

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Franco régime makes communism certain one cannot avoid taking a risk which is the smaller the sooner it is taken. Such an objection, however, would not take into account that if Spain becomes communist no longer depends solely on developments within Spain but also on the outcome of the struggle for the Western world. If we win this struggle we can risk a forcible change in Spain much more easily; conversely, if we lose, Spain will become communist anyway. This is not the time to take such risks, particularly since there is a better way to remove Franco which I shall outline later.

(2) Already the mere threat of sanctions seems to have strengthened Franco's position. I refer only to Sam Pope Brewer's reports in the New York *Times* which certainly cannot be charged with pro-Franco bias. It seems likely that if sanctions are ruthlessly applied the proud Spaniards will resent the foreign intervention, and Franco will become so solidly entrenched that there will be no way to change his régime before it ends in communism.

(3) Spain's economic situation is desperate. It is the common people, who suffer already too much, who would suffer most from sanctions. We have no moral right to inflict further hardships on them, the less so since we have allowed much more objectionable dictatorships to enslave other countries without going beyond pious protests. Again, the economic consequences of sanctions would play right into the hands of the communists.

Yet, there seems to be one way to get rid of Franco which will avoid all these pitfalls. It is based on Secretary Marshall's declaration that the United States is ready to help every European country willing to help itself. The urgency of Spain's need for such help is undeniable. Yet the position of our government would be unassailable and could not be regarded as unwarranted interference by even the most nationalistic Spaniards, if it told the Spanish government that while we are eager to help Spain we cannot do so as long as the economic mismanagement of the Franco régime foils our condition of self-help. We could make out a sound case by stating that we are no longer rich enough to pour money down the drain, as would happen if we gave it to a government which has demonstrated its wastefulness by its excessive appropriations for the army and the police, by its connivance in the incredibly widespread graft (the *estraperlo*) and by its tax policy which puts a so much greater burden on the poor than on the rich.

Once the Church and army leaders realize that only Franco prevents receiving generous and ample economic assistance, without which bankruptcy cannot be averted, they will exert pressure on him to step down. His new succession law affords a good opportunity for a smooth transition, the only kind of transition which will reduce, although not completely exclude, the danger of an upheaval from which the communists would profit.

If we intervene in Spain in any other manner we are likely to stir up an anti-democratic hornets' nest. No Catholic, however liberal, would want to see, let alone contribute to, another persecution of the Church! No true friend of the admirable Spanish nation, however hostile to Franco, would desire to overthrow him at the expense of another civil war. A. E. BRETTAUER.

SEMPER FIDELIS

Quantico, Virginia

TO the Editors: An editorial in THE COMMONWEAL in the issue of June 6 in speaking of migratory farm labor stated that Marine General Erskine was of a "military body scarcely noted for tenderness." This implies that General Erskine arrived at his findings "in spite of" his life of Marine Corps training and tradition. I do not agree. Marines have fought and served in every part of the world; wherever they have been they have served with a zeal to see the right prevail. In Central America, China, Pacific islands, the world's ports, Marines have lived with all peoples in fairness and mutual respect. Championship of individual and human rights goes without saying. Each Marine works to be a gentleman at all times—with all persons.

I believe that General Erskine was chosen for his job and reached his findings *because of* that for which the Marine Corps stands. P. A. DAVIS,
1st Lt., USMC.

"RES PUBLICA"

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: Readers of THE COMMONWEAL who have subscribed to *Res Publica,* the international Christian Democrat review, will surely be interested in learning why they have not been receiving their copies of that magazine recently. The Editor, Mr. Domenico Russo, died suddenly in Paris on May 10 at the age of 71. He was preparing to go to London to effect a reconciliation between Churchill and Count Sforza and to discuss with the former Prime minister how best to advance the cause of European federation.

JOSEPH M. CALDERON,
American agent *Res Publica,*
Suite 1407, 468 Fourth Ave.

The Stage & Screen

Laura

THE PRODUCTION of a play adapted from a successful movie, which was in turn adapted from a successful novel, denotes not only a commercial problem, but also a function of modern criticism. The only rational excuse for such a venture would rest in the excellence of the round acting on view. In the skills of Otto Kruger, K. T. Stevens, Hugh Marlowe, and Tom Rutherford, I can see neither an extension, nor an improvement upon the movie playing. The theater script itself falls far below the camera's especial facilities to create airs and weathers, as well as suspense, and the physical trickery necessary to a realistic and sophisticated thriller of this size. I earnestly wish the author and producers of this Summer Stupidity would let me compare the cinema, stage, and written versions of the business in order to save everyone's money and my own patience. There is no point in reviewing stupidities: it is the critic's business to eradicate them. (*At the Cort.*) KAPPO PHELAN.

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Dream Bait

ONCE AGAIN the fantasy boys are in action; and the only explanation I can give for the current Hollywood interest in "out-of-this-world" pictures is that movie makers hope to attract audiences who are trying to escape from post-war realities. Since most of the straight Hollywood movies are already tinged by an aura of escapism, this present trend is a bit redundant. Fantasy, however, permits additional unreality and allows the film to indulge in flights of fancy without bringing down the wrath of critical audiences.

Both of the new items in this field start with a subject that is very real (death) before they soar upward and onward into their fantastic stories. At the beginning of *"The Ghost and Mrs. Muir,"* Lucy Muir (Gene Tierney), who has been mourning her late husband for some time, rebels against this prolonged period and leaves her weeping in-laws. With her daughter (Natalie Wood) and housekeeper (Edna Best) she moves into a house by the sea, a house that is as salty and charming as the ghost who haunts it, the ghost of the sea captain who was its owner. The romance that develops between him and Mrs. Muir, who is no typical turn-of-the-century English widow, is not exactly a lavender-and-old-lace affair. This ghost even inspires Mrs. Muir to write a book; in fact he dictates his slightly bawdy memoirs which become quite a success under the title of "Blood and Swash." The late Mr. Muir is soon forgotten; and even a living contender for Lucy's heart (he is played by George Sanders and so is, of course, a cad—a married one at that) could not compete with Rex Harrison's astral charm. On the whole Director Joseph Mankiewicz has made an amusing movie out of the script Philip Dunne wrote from R. A. Dick's novel. The production is excellent and the acting good, especially Rex Harrison's as the worldly ghost. Artistically, the film errs by being too talky and static; and unfortunately it runs too long. You may finally get a little tired of living with Mrs. Muir through so many years; but you'll never get too much of Mr. Harrison who will change your entire attitude toward ghosts—especially the more disturbing kind like Banquo and Hamlet's Father.

At the beginning of *"Repeat Performance,"* we see Sheila Page (a famous actress played by Joan Leslie who is too young to portray a famous actress) shooting her husband. This is New Year's Eve and Sheila wishes she had the whole year to live over because she is certain she could avoid the steps that led to the tragedy. Her wish is granted, and Sheila with all the characters involved in her sad story are carried back to the previous New Year's Eve. But Sheila, even with her foreknowledge which she tries to use to advantage, cannot keep her hard-drinking husband (Louis Hayward) from drinking more or from falling in love with an English playwright (Virginia Field); nor can she prevent her good friend (Richard Basehart) from attaching himself to a wealthy nit-wit (Natalie Schafer) who eventually puts him in an insane asylum. What this film is trying to say in its awkward, melodramatic way is that there's a destiny that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will. At times this fantastic story holds our interest, but it has so many weaknesses (outside of its main theme that destiny doesn't care about the pattern as long as the result is the same) that we get bored with the hokum before New Year's Eve and murder turn up again. For one thing, Sheila's husband is such an unpleasant character that we wonder why she tries so hard to hold on to him. Furthermore, this kind of fantasy requires the exactly correct handling that Dunsany or Barrie would have given it. But in the way this pretentious production mixes claptrap and metaphysics no one will ask for a repeat performance.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

The Labor Movement

The First Reactions

THE TAFT-HARTLEY Bill is now law and nobody is quite sure what is going to happen. One thing that will probably not happen is a general strike. Bill Green of the AFL has already thrown his weight against it, and knowing the temperament of Phil Murray and other top leaders of the CIO, one can pretty safely say that they will do the same.

There is of course the strike of some 250,000 miners, but it is pretty hard to tell how much of this is pure protest, how much is John L. Lewis cutting down on the coal stock-piles so that a later strike will be more effective, and how much is the miners themselves jumping the gun on their ten-day mass vacation, June 28 to July 8. Probably a little of each.

Strangely enough, the communists are not talking general strike either right now, although they were strong for a 24-hour stoppage before the bill was passed. *The Daily Worker* is very militant and defiant, but when you boil it all down—no general strike.

Guessing a little, one might say that the tactic will probably be to test most of the provisions in court and avoid outright defiance as much as possible. If any one

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provision is ignored, it will doubtless be the one that outlaws every kind of political action by the unions, up to and including the printing of voting records in union papers.

If any part of the bill is unconstitutional, and the chances are that a good part of it is, then this provision is surely the most unconstitutional, since it appears clearly to violate about half of the Bill of Rights, including free speech, free press, free assembly and free lunch. Strict observance of it, furthermore, would be peculiarly disastrous because it would just about paralyze labor's attempt to strike back where the striking is most painful and effective, namely, in the ballot box.

The communists will also be missing a big trick if they don't pick out a few spots in which to defy the provision requiring all union officials to sign an affidavit that they are not members of the Commnist Party. Here is a wonderful chance for the CP's to play martyr. In fact, they don't have to play it. They *are* martyrs. What has happened is that Congress, not quite so stupid and reactionary that it could find within itself the capacity to outlaw the Party as a whole, has passed the buck to the labor movement and said, "If you don't get rid of your CP officials, we won't give you bargaining rights."

The result is going to be that honest anti-communists in the trade unions are going to find it not easier, but harder, to get rid of them. By wrapping themselves warmly in the martyr mantle, the CP's will be able to convince a lot of people that the fight to preserve the autonomy of the union from unwarranted government interference is more important than getting rid of a few Stalinists. Question: if a communist has the legal right to be elected an official of the United States, how can you deprive him of the legal right to be elected an official of a labor union? Is the part more important than the whole? If the union membership wants to deprive him of that right, okay. There are good arguments for it, and some good arguments against it. But it is their affair, not the affair of a government that is afraid to follow the logic of its own shaky premises.

Another very interesting reaction to the Taft-Hartley Bill is the reaction of Henry Wallace and friends, who immediately tried to use its passage as another cornerstone for the building of a third party. Their principal complaint seems to be that Truman went off to a ball game after delivering his veto message instead of spending his time wrestling with Southern Senators. Truman's going out to the ball game may have been a matter of poor judgment and worse politics, but as cornerstone material for a third party it seems to be pretty crumbly stuff indeed.

Wallace and friends have very short memories. The complaint that a little whip-cracking from the White House would have driven the Southerners into line just doesn't fit into history. There comes to mind more than a few occasions when the great Roosevelt himself cracked the whip until his arm was stiff, and still the Southerners voted wrong.

Wallace and friends know perfectly well that we do not have a two-party system, but a three-party system and that to judge the Democratic Party (North) by the acts of the Democratic Party (South) is just not honest. The Democratic Party (North) has an excellent record in both House and Senate on the Taft-Hartley Bill and on nearly every other measure of interest to American labor.

Truman himself may be singularly unimpressive. Truman himself *is* singularly unimpressive and the chances of stopping his renomination in 1948 are exactly zero. It still doesn't add up to a third party. There is a lot of talk in the labor movement, even among sensible people, that the only thing left for labor now is a third party. But when you take it apart and put it together again, all that you find is that a third party would mean Republican landslides for about the next ten elections. And somehow that just doesn't seem very appealing. JOHN C. CORT.

Books of the Week

A History of the Church. Philip Hughes. Volume III: The Revolt Against the Church, Aquinas to Luther. Sheed. $4.00.

THE PICTURE of the Church and Western Christendom during the period this third volume of Philip Hughes's history covers—from the death of Saint Louis IX of France in 1270 to the year 1517, when Martin Luther hung out those 95 Theses in Wittenberg—is shadowed, mixed up, and, to a distressing degree, not pleasant reading. It is a period of turbulence and trouble, and, except for the local beauty of some saints and of the Italian Renaissance, not a time of the flowering of a civilization but of its painful transition.

Father Hughes condenses into his book of 525 pages an enormous quantity of information about the era. The excellent bibliography and footnotes and the text itself throughout show that he is using the most mature scholarship available, much of it accumulated over only the past decade or two.

The material is given a kind of form, or argument (an intelligibility and attractiveness to the reader) principally by two elements. The first is the author's clearly stated allegiance to Thomist philosophy and orthodox theology. This provides a steady reference in observing a multiplicity of ideas and attitudes, of historical actions and events, which the reader can bank on and understand and can use as a constant background reflecting light on the passing men and movements. This should be nearly as useful for one who does not share the historian's Faith as for one who does. The practical soundness of the Thomist approach is indicated by the honesty of this work: a very winning truthfulness of purpose which avoids "twisting facts" to sustain a thesis, but rather shows the reader who and what was going on, whether what appears in the exhibition provides a scandal or a prop for theory, prejudice or Belief. The soundness of approach is shown as well by a catholicity of interest and breadth of awareness and sympathy which stimulate the author to treat with a high degree of fairness and acuteness and minimum of distortion a remarkably high proportion of the "problems"—human, institutional, material, intellectual and religious—which crowd these centuries of profound and rapid change.

The achievement involved in preserving this kind of impartiality can be measured by the chaotic variety of persons and ideas Europe brought forth in shifting from the medieval to the modern era. The last chapter talks of Luther in, certainly, definitely restricted terms of reference—as revolt from a rather strictly interpreted medieval religious-philosophic-institutional synthesis, and as embodying the whole length of the aberrant path of Protestantism away from Catholic orthodoxy. This restriction might, by leaving out the special life and content

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of Protestantism in itself, and by associating with Luther the wider diversions apparent in the Protestantism of later times, seem an exception to the book's sympathy and impartiality if it were not so clearly and frankly and usefully declared: the Catholic Church is the stated protagonist. The first chapter opens on an indeed distant-seeming medieval crusade, and it runs quickly into consideration of Boniface VIII (1294-1303), that catastrophic canonist and hyperbolic contender for the temporal rights of the Popes, and into the opponent, Philip the Fair (Philip IV of France, 1285-1314). Between these years and men the Church embraced (and excommunicated) a formidable list of constantly new Europeans, and underwent a rapid and disconcerting series of institutional, social, intellectual and religious vicissitudes.

Father Hughes writes especially creatively about "The Avignon Régime" (1309-1376), using material that has not previously been widely exploited. "The Schism of the West" (1378-1409), and "The Church under the Councils" (say, 1409-1449), require, of course, many pages of exposition—not entertaining or easy reading, but balanced and instructive. Easier, perhaps, but no more agreeable sentimentally is the long chapter on "A Papacy of Princes," which is an exposition of the reigns of Sixtus IV (della Rovere, 1471-84), Innocent VII (Cybó, 1484-92), Alexander VI (Borgia, 1492-1503), Julius II (della Rovere, 1503-13), and Leo X (Medici, 1513-21).

Most of the history is marshaled under the subjects mentioned above: the state and political history as well as ecclesiastical and religious. But the special chapters devoted especially to "cultural" subjects make the most interesting and stimulating studies. "The Crisis in the World of Thought" treats "The Problem of Church and State" from Philip the Fair to Dante (and on into the future), and "The Problem of Faith and Reason" from the Oxford Franciscan school (with a retrospect to Saint Thomas) to the development of the *via moderna* and Luther. Subchapters deal with the stormy history of the Friars Minor and Marsiglio of Padua. Then a remarkable chapter entitled "Christian Life, Mystics, Thinkers" covers in twenty brilliant pages the religious life and thought and the form and content of devotion from 1270 to the teachers of Luther, providing a most essential bridge between the High Middle Ages and the modern world. The next-to-last chapter, "Christian Life and Thought, 1471-1517," is the final very useful omnibus section, focusing upon "State Absolutism," "Catholic Thought" (best on Erasmus, but seeming somewhat hurried or perhaps impatient with other luminaries of the time), "The General Council of the Lateran, 1512-1517," and "Christian Life."

The first unity and form of the volume comes from the author's explicit adherence to a definite Thomistic viewpoint. The second basis for the organization and comprehension of material is the dominant theme which Philip Hughes sees in the record and which he emphasizes in all his exposition. It is, indeed, the subtitle on the cover: "The Revolt Against the Church."

> This is a history, very largely, of revolt; not, that is to say, of disobedience only, even on the grand scale, but of the denial of an authority's right to obedience. The kings, the bishops, the religious orders, the princes of commerce—in all we see the same malaise increasingly at work. We face the spectacle of revolt in the name of law, in the name of thought, in the name, even, of *la vie mystique*.

The development of the conception of "revolt" in the book is in large measure the presentation of a thesis. I should think it would not be strictly speaking history, but a study of, or from, history—an interpretation. Toynbee's "second chapter" of Western History, 1075-1475, is parallel. In that "Study of History," it will be recalled,

> When our Western forefathers succeeded in repelling the Scandinavian onslaught, one of the means by which they achieved this victory over their human environment was by forging the potent military and social instrument of the feudal system. But in the next stage of Western history the social and economic and political differentiation of classes which feudalism entailed set up certain stresses and strains which in their turn produced the next challenge with which the growing society was confronted. Western Christendom had hardly rested from its labors in beating back the Vikings before it found its next task in the problem of replacing the feudal system of relations between classes by a new system of relations between sovereign states and their individual citizens.

Such an interpretative study, when made as broadly and intelligently as Philip Hughes's (and Toynbee's, surely), gives the historical data more clearly and memorably than an account aimed at giving exclusively the passing picture of the past and excluding consideration of cause and the unity of generations and the relative good of differing social and personal conditions. In addition, the reader becomes engaged, as it were, in an argument about values and policy; or, better, he is enlisted in a joint inquiry searching for and affirming values and policy which are felt to be even more relevant for the present and future than for the past. It is an exciting kind of history to read. In a review there is no room to examine in any critical detail as large a thesis as this book presents. But many readers of this excellent history should find it a thoroughly interesting and rewarding operation.

PHILIP BURNHAM.

Dwight Craig. Donald MacRae. Houghton. $2.75.

THE MIDDLE WEST is in again, and, if my sights are properly focused, it's Iowa on the cob! In Bethesda, probably the dreariest town in that state, there is the Old Craig House, a slovenly last-gasp of a hotel. Josh Craig, the town Lothario, is the owner, and, after a short-lived marriage to one perfectly supine Rosemary Sinclair, the old reprobate dies. His wife does not live much longer, either. The fruit of this strange union is an only son, Dwight.

Dwight, a pretty baby, is completely smothered by Aunt Martha's solicitous, inundating affection. Martha Sinclair right at the start ruins any manliness, independence and character this obnoxious little sniveler might have acquired.

High school is full of Dwight's mean smartness and teacher's pet-ism. College finds our snarling, envenomed and hopelessly misguided hero in the clutches of fast "wimmen," liquor and "les artistes." Dwight's first year of teaching does nothing to enhance his native charm.

Dear old Aunt Martha, Craig House burnt down, and she worrying herself sick over her precious nephew, most opportunely dies at this point. Dwight, equipped with her legacy, does post-graduate work in Education in one of the "great prairie universities."

Lo and behold! The handsome *Dr.* Craig emerges as an authority on educational methods and what makes the Younger Generation tick. I have yet to meet a more polished, emptier, smugger stuffed shirt in modern fiction.

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Dwight of course marries correctly, thinks correctly, lives correctly, a stiff well preserved in the juices of his own conceit and omnipotence.

It is in this last part of his novel where Donald MacRae shows the potentialities of a good satirist; he takes the "isms" for a deftly derisive ride. But for the rest of "Dwight Craig," Mr. MacRae is neither Sinclair Lewis, nor J. Swift nor good red herring. His book is far too long; the first two-thirds of it are just dull.

The only sensible, well-rounded character in "Dwight Craig" is Clay Ferguson of Bethsesda. Mr. MacRae has emphasized human mediocrity and fanaticism, but he does not need nearly four hundred pages to make his point.

The chief trouble with Dwight Craig is that the central figure never comes alive, even as a human flop, nor is he sufficiently unreal to be a mere cardboard mouthpiece of his creator.

One of the problems of a young writer is mastering the technique of omission. In "Dwight Craig" it is difficult for the author to find the forest. He has too many trees, or perhaps too many cornfields. ELIZABETH JOHNSON.

The Psalms. A New Translation. Ronald Knox. Sheed. $2.00.

TAKING as his text the New Latin Psalter and using as a reference the Hebrew version of the Psalms, Monsignor Knox has given us a most beautiful, inspiring, and readable English rendition of the songs of Sion. At the end of the book are translations also of the canticles of the Breviary. One is reminded often of the English of the King James Version: there is a simplicity of phrasing which approximates that of the first English translations. Certainly Father Knox has an accurate grasp of the meaning of the words and has succeeded in making understandable so many of the more obscure verses of the Psalter. This little book, beautifully printed and put into handy size, should become the *vade mecum* of all who cherish the Psalms and want to know them in their richness, beauty, and human appeal. Perhaps one day Monsignor Knox will attempt a metrical version of the Psalter based on this excellent prose translation. RICHARD FLOWER

An Infinity of Questions. C. J. Eustace. Longmans. $3.50.

THIS SMALL BOOK is ambitious. In the persons of five women, a poet, Helen Foley, a genius, Katherine Mansfield, an "artist in agony" the pianist France Pastorelli, a mystic, Elizabeth Leseur, and a saint, Teresa of Lisieux, the author studies, and seeks to distinguish, and to make that distinction clear to his readers, between the Religion of Art, and the Art of Religion. In the introduction, Michael de la Bedoyere discusses how fully each of these five characters accepted the universe. He distinguishes between those unable to accept it, owing to the evil effects of the Renaissance (Helen Foley and Katherine Mansfield), and the other, luckier, three. The first two "were never able to grasp, directly or indirectly, that for which they were all the time seeking"; the others "through the retention of the Faith so widely lost" were able to receive, each in her own degree, "the Way, the Truth, the Life which alone can lead to the Reality which *is* the Universe, the Godhead." This statement seems one far more likely to have been acceptable and accepted by the first two of Mr. Eustace's ladies than by the latter three. For is there not here identically the same error as is castigated by Mr. de la Bedoyere a bare two paragraphs earlier? The specific error of the Renaissance, by which men turn away from truth "to seek for false gods in themselves, their achievements, their learning," etc.? The Universe no more *is* Reality than I am; and it might well be that Helen Foley's childish equating of the real world with her dreams, so that, though the Light was always about her, dazzling, blinding, instead of opening her eyes to see with and through It, she screwed them tight shut against It, and Katherine Mansfield's tragic flight from the Reality that was pursuing her, what time she thought she was pursuing It, both stem from the same pantheistic (in *their* case) ignorance. Mr. Eustace is careful to avoid such crude error, though even he makes some generalizations that are almost as dangerously woolly. What exactly, for example, does he mean by saying "mysticism is a work of divine grace alone"? Mysticism can be maniac or diabolic, and though indirectly, God permits both madness and the machinations of Satan, it would hardly be accurate to ascribe their achievements to the sole power of Providence.

The quotations from Helen Foley's letters, rather than her somewhat trite poems, reveal an excellently sensible, as well as sensitive, person. "In writing," she tells her husband, "it's definitely less natural to me to express personal than imagined emotions." And, again, discussing whether a "turn for verses" is strong enough to be worth anything, she says "if it isn't (and I've never thought mine was) then it simply means that one's development depends on the accident of being driven in upon oneself, which is generally the same thing as being unhappy. But who wants to be unhappy and who would dream about life when there was a chance to live it? Not I." This is a sanity, beside which Odin's deliberate loss of his right eye to the Norns, as payment for his draught from the well of wisdom which they guarded, is madness; this is a hill, beside which Tabor is a valley. Helen Foley died of cancer at forty; Katherine Mansfield of consumption at thirty-four. Katherine was a far profounder person than Helen; in nursery jargon, there "was more *to* her." But she was also more riddled with anxiety, more fretted by unanswered questions. And she essayed the most dangerous of all experiments, she tried of and by herself to enter the Dark Night of the soul, instead of waiting until she was put there. With the result that she found herself in an outer darkness, in which all the disunited parts of her anguished being hooted each to each like screech-owls, "Is there a Me?" "If I were allowed one single cry to God, that cry would be 'I want to be REAL,' " she wrote. Whereas, little Teresa Martin, who wished to give herself to God from the age of three, when she was dying, just ten years younger, of the same malady as Katherine, put it very differently. "I offer myself to Thee, O my Beloved, that Thou mayest ever accomplish Thy holy Will in me without creatures placing an obstacle in the way." The greatest joy of Love is not to possess God but to belong to Him, Father D'Arcy writes in his majestic "Mind and Heart of Love," and the contrast between Helen and Katherine and Teresa most emphatically bears him out. Elizabeth Leseur puts it so well, that normal, rational, attractive, intelligent French bourgeoise, who traveled so far on the interior journey. The fulfilment of her personality came, as that of any human personality must come, through the exposing of herself to God "not in making our own way, but in making room in ourself for the growth of Divine Grace in the soul." And she exquisitely summarizes "the essence of the true attitude

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of being spiritually awake": for God, suffering and offering; for her neighbor, the giving and expending of herself; for herself, the forgetting and silencing of herself. Little wonder that after her death from cancer, her husband, until then a scoffer and an unbeliever, became a Dominican priest. And both Teresa and Elizabeth would have approved France Pastorelli's prayer: "May I not serve Thee less devotedly in my chains, than I should have served Thee in my freedom." These five studies, even if they do not tell us very much about the Art of Religion or the Religion of Art, are first-rate biographical portraits of their subjects. Mr. Eustace is an excellent portrait painter, even if perhaps not the profound esthetic philosopher he believes himself to be.

ANNE FREMANTLE.

Three Ways to Mecca. Edwin Corle. Duell. $3.00.

THIS IS NOT a tiresome book. But it is a rather annoying second-rate mixture of Thorne Smith, Aldous Huxley, and Elliot Paul, with a dash of Evelyn Waugh and a sprinkling of Lloyd Douglas. You can imagine such a punch would be interesting and might possibly be potent. Corle never quite succeeds in being intoxicating.

Oliver Walling is an author who has a yen for wearing a dog suit, every now and then, complete with head. Just because he wants to. John Lackland is an old friend from Paris, years ago. Oliver's wife is ultra-understanding; his secretary, properly fussy, and his acquaintances, who rally together in the last part of the book at a bizarre buffet, include a vague bishop, a charlatan psychiatrist, a silent swami, a mad countess, and a few other relatively normal people. The setting? California, of course. A series of flashbacks gives us a detailed picture of John and Oliver together in Paris, where they meet the wonderful Christina, whom John marries many years later, after having abandoned his intention of committing suicide on May 12, 1950. The Parisian episodes are flavorful, but some of the French tour is set in catalogue-ish prose. The Paris scenes will amuse those who know Paris, though heaven knows Corle spends many pages on stilted dialogue, visits to Parisian iniquity, and speculations on spatial philosophy.

But there are bright spots. Sometimes the dialogue is really clever. Quite often the scenes are delightfully ludicrous, and deftly done. And if you are the kind of person who would like to wear a dog suit occasionally, you'll get a number of chuckles. Nevertheless, one can't quite see the reason for such a book, unless it is designed for summer vacation reading, when the weather and languor compete with the printed word, and one is often quite happy to let the former win. T. E. CASSIDY.

Guam and Its People. Laura Thompson. Princeton. $5.00.

AMERICANS ARE inclined to boast of their colonial record, and to cite as proof their treatment of the Filipinos. It is a convincing instance; but before succumbing to self-righteousness, it is well to go a little further and examine the evidence in Guam. Dr. Thompson, a competent anthropologist with wide experience in the Pacific, does this for us in the present volume.

In the old spiritual writers' euphemism, the result is not edifying. In fact, it is painfully disconcerting. When we acquired the island in 1898, the inhabitants had achieved a measure of local autonomy and cultural integration under Spanish rule. It was replaced by the strict military rule of American naval government, administered by short-term governors who laid down divergent policies that altered the most minute details of native life. An indigenous culture that was never understood was threatened by erratic interference and contradictory fiats. The Guamanians had no appeal from these decrees and were deprived of the most elemental civil and political liberties. At the present time there is a bill before a House Committee that would redress some of these wrongs. But the Navy is still reluctant to relinquish control over an island for which it has vast strategic plans.

There is much more in this volume than the failure of American military government. Guam furnishes an interesting example of the persistence of an indigenous personality type during almost four centuries of outside influence and alien control, even though the racial group that first developed the culture pattern has practically disappeared. It also illustrates the replacement of the native religion by Catholicism, which became the effective center of cultural life. The study will be of particular interest to the thousands who visited the island during the recent war. J. N. MOODY.

Big Country Texas. Donald Day. Duell. $3.50.

THE latest addition to the extensive American Folkways Series of regional studies is undoubtedly one of the most amusing for those who like the simple humor and the tall tale of the frontier. As with a number of the other studies in the series, the emphasis is very largely historical, if highly informal in tone. The object is obviously to convey the atmosphere which pervades this vast empire of cattle, oil, cotton and other mammoth operations. The author is a native son who shares his fellow-Texans' bumptious optimism in spite of some of the political notoriety of Jim and Ma Ferguson and the success of such figures as the incumbent Senator "Pappy" O'Daniel.

The Redemption of Israel. John Friedman. Sheed. $2.00.

THE JEWISH question is a most profound one, about which many people have much to say. To say something really helpful, however, one must have faith, and scholarship, and humility, and a great deal of love. Unfortunately, Dr. Friedman seems to have only faith.

He states that Jewish history falls "naturally" into three epochs (Egyptian, Babylonian, Universal), each of which is in turn divided into three phases (Sin, Punishment, Salvation). And he proceeds to elaborate on this rather aribtrary concept with too little logic, with a superficial knowledge of theology and psychology, and with a singular lack of tact.

For example: In discussing Jewish objections to the Catholic faith, he says: "The challenge is thrown out that Catholicism is religious assimilation. The answer is that if Catholicism is false and orthodoxy true, then Catholicism is indeed religious assimilation, but if the reverse holds, then Catholicism is what we have made it—the True Judaism."

And again: "The past gives no grounds for belief that a return to Orthodoxy would solve the Jewish problem or alleviate anti-Semitism. The worst horrors of the war have fallen on the decaying multitudes of Orthodox Jews in Poland." To refer to Orthodox Jews as "decaying" seems hardly correct, but even if it were, this is an ex-

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tremely offensive statement to make in the face of the suffering the Jews have undergone during the past few years.

Had Dr. Friedman (who is a convert from Judaism to Catholicism) been more moderate in his statements, more understanding and charitable, and less superficial in his analysis of the "Jewish problem," he might have written a book that would have helped his people along their road, for his sincerity cannot be questioned and his faith is manifest. But this book, I fear, will have an effect quite contrary to that which its author wished to achieve.

Perhaps, however, the publishers should share the blame—they were irresponsible in accepting the book for publication, in advertising it as they have done, and in not editing it much more carefully than they did.

UNITY EVANS.

The Last Trump. Denis de Rougemont. Doubleday. $2.00.

SOMEWHERE in this discussion of the twentieth century versus the atom bomb Mr. de Rougemont declares that, for some years now, he has been an active pessimist, a description of himself which would seem to mean that he has been expecting his fellow-Westerners to pull something like this, and that, since they have—since Hiroshima is now forever with us—he, as a result of his years of gloomy preparation, is better fitted for the new companionship than the rest of us are. That's what one might think, particularly if one had never come upon an active pessimist before. But after reading Mr. de Rougemont's 151-page summary of what we have got ourselves into and what we should do to get out of it, the reader will come away convinced, at least, of one thing: that active pessimism is something more than a comfortable giving in to things as they are. It is, anyhow, according to the way Mr. de Rougemont practices it. He may have been expecting the worst, but now that it has been delivered he is not any more enthusiastic about it than are those people who were surprised to learn that Western man has not only been plotting for a long time to get rid of himself but has finally hit on the surest, gaudiest way of doing it. Furthermore, Mr. de Rougemont does not intend to take it in silence, and since he makes his living by his imagination, he is perfectly equipped, as he demonstrates in this book, to take some of his own advice on what should be done—keep telling the people, at the top of one's voice, that everything is set for this planet's final, splintering roll downhill, and that, this time, the old restrainers won't do.

In this book, Mr. de Rougemont has spread the alarm through a number of real or imaginary letters which he addresses to somebody called *chere amie*. With the exception of this bit of salon by-play, however, plus an occasional lapse into a kind of grim levity which he describes as his own way of being serious in the atomic age, Rougemont is all business. He is in favor of the quick establishment of a world government; he would like to see more enthusiasm for the planet as such, after the fashion of his departed flying-writing friend, St. Exupery; he requests a few reassuring words from the Soviets; and finally, as an indication, apparently, of how genuinely desperate he considers the situation to be, he calls on the movie people to take up the job of keeping the public in a state of constant fret, a condition which he views as the necessary spawning temperature for solutions.

JOHN BRODERICK.

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Our Lady of Fatima. William Thomas Walsh. Macmillan. $2.75.
Our Lady of Light. C. Barthas and G. da Fonseca. Bruce. $2.50.

BETWEEN May 13th and October 13th, 1917, there occurred at Fatima, Portugal, a series of manifestations which bears striking resemblance to the apparitions of La Salette and of Lourdes in the last century. Three shepherd children who were the principal witnesses thereto stoutly maintained that they had seen Our Lady and by her had been favored with a message. And some seventy thousand pilgrims, present for the announced visitation of October 13th, went away convinced that heaven had intervened in the phenomenon they witnessed. Since that date the wide Catholic world, from simple laymen to Sovereign Pontiff, has been stirred by a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that has spread fan-wise from Fatima.

William Thomas Walsh took the trouble last summer to travel to Portugal and to get from the lips of Sister Maria das Dores, sole survivor among the three shepherds, the story of the visitations of three decades ago. The account he gives so ably has grown from that interview as well as from the perusal of the nun's four unpublished memoirs and from conversations with others who were at Fatima in 1917. Certainly there is in it deep conviction of the objective reality of the apparitions and full awareness of the significance of the Lady's message that has to do with penance and reparations and the need of the consecration of Russia to the Heart of Mary.

The other volume is a translation and adaptation of a French work by Canon Barthas which is itself dependent upon a book done in Italian by the Portuguese Jesuit, Gonzaga da Fonseca. Unfortunately, its American publisher has followed the bad practice of omitting both the name of the translator and the title and date of the piece translated. It is thus next to impossible to know just how much is a rendering of the original and how much is adaptation. In its present form, this second study has not the literary finish nor the dramatic presentation of the Walsh volume, but it is valuable for its documentary section and for the description it gives not only of the apparitions but of what has transpired at Fatima since 1917 to make of it a pilgrimage place and of the miracles which have been worked at its sanctuary.

Catholics, of course, are not obligated by their Faith to an acceptance of Fatima. Still, one can scarcely close these accounts without feeling that he has been in contact with the authentically supernatural. And the observant reader, of Walsh particularly, will be struck by the mighty change wrought in the spiritual lives of the children after the visitation—a rapid passage from normal goodness to high heroism—which calls to mind the Gospel dictum about the judging of a tree by its fruit.

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Next Week

THE PAN-TURK DANGER, by Boris Gourevitch, points to a neglected consideration in United States plans for aiding Greece and Turkey. The prospect of the Turks taking on the Soviet Union may seem at first fantastic. But Dr. Gourevitch tells of certain "fanatical young officers" who would not hesitate to start the fireworks in hopes that their nationalistic ambitions would get American backing. Without due precautions, then, our peace with Russia hangs precariously upon the danger of an incident.

POE: THE SOCIOLOGY OF COMPOSITION, by Henry Rago, is a new interpretation of a major American writer by a Midwestern critic who finds that Edgar Allen Poe is important, among other reasons because "he is sensitive to what we know thus far as the central tendency of American writing."

MAJOR RIVERS, by Bernard Raymund, continues The Commonweal's current policy of featuring distinguished fiction in our summer issues. It is another one of the poignant Baber series which readers may remember from last Christmas. And it presents a colorful impression of life in our American South a generation ago.

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The Inner Forum

Welcoming the DP's

ONE of the strongest forces supporting the passage of the Stratton Bill, which would suspend present American immigration restrictions to the extent of accepting one hundred thousand European displaced persons each year for the next four years, is the Catholic Church. When Bishop William T. Mulloy of Covington, Kentucky, president of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, appeared before the House Subcommittee on Immigration, he testified in favor of the bill and declared, according to the NCWC News Service, that the United States "has the moral obligation to grant asylum to refugees from injustices," citing the human "right of access to the means of livelihood by migration when necessary."

Bishop Mulloy told the Congressional hearing about the sixteen American bishops who have already made preparations to give incoming DP's a new start in life—particularly in rural areas. And the Rural Life Conference itself—with branches in 83 dioceses—has offered its facilities so that these new Americans may begin "as hired help, during which apprenticeship they will become thoroughly familiar with American methods of agriculture and adjust themselves to life in the community, and ultimately, having been thoroughly absorbed into the community itself, as renters and then owners of the land."

Among the specific invitations which Bishop Mulloy brought to the attention of the House subcommittee was that of Archbishop John Gregory Murray of St. Paul, Minn., who offered to sponsor the following: 1,000 families from Bohemia, 500 families from France and a like number from Italy, and 300 families from the Flemish area of Belgium—all these to have a rural background; 1,000 families from Poland and 300 families from Slovakia—these two groups with an industrial background. In offering the collaboration of the Diocese of Lafayette, Indiana, Bishop J. E. Bennett said that the following places of employment would absorb a number of DP's in his diocese: farms (as owner-operators or farm laborers), hospitals, seminaries, colleges and schools, rectories and churches. Coadjutor Bishop of St. Cloud, Minn., Peter W. Bartholome, cited twelve Polish parishes in his diocese where DP families could find haven.

Bishop Mulloy declared that "It is our Christian duty and moral obligation to remove the displaced persons from their present plight. . . . The natural moral law is imposed upon all individuals as creatures of God."

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